

BRIEF HISTORY OF DR. JOHN W. AIRD

by Grace Bunch (Niece)

Dr. John W. Aird was born September 26, 1863 in Heber City, Wasatch County, Utah. His parents were William and Elizabeth McLean Aird.

His parents were born and reared in Scotland. Some kindly missionaries brought the teachings of the L. D. S. Church into their home. After much deliberation and studying they embraced the gospel and were baptized and very shortly left their beloved home to sail to America, in the year 1852. 1853

As all the early pioneers did they crossed the plains suffering many hardships. They settled in Spanish Fork and began helping to settle this western wilderness and also began raising their family. However, they were soon called to help settle Heber valley.

The father was a weaver by trade. He not only wove the cloth that made clothes for his family, but for many of the settlers. He also did artistic weaving which was used as scarfs and cushions to help beautify the modest homes of that day.

Heber at that time had what was called the community shepherd. John M. Murdock took care of the sheep furnishing the wool to be made into cloth.

The children of William Aird worked very hard, cleaning, hand carding, and spinning the wool into thread to be used in weaving the cloth.

Six children were born to this union. William Thompson, Elizabeth Stewart (twins) Janet Brown, Henry McLean, John William and Grace Mary. The one twin William Thompson died in infancy.

Dr. Aird spent his early school days in Heber which proved very difficult for him. In his own words I will quote. "As a child it was difficult for me to learn. That difficulty increased as time went on, due as I later viewed it, to some of my early teachers, having little or no knowledge of psychology and even less of the dynamic power of suggestion. Owing to my stupidity my teachers would occasionally, if not oftener, become impatient. One especially told me I could not learn and that I would never amount to anything. I took it for granted she knew. No doubt it was on that account that I developed an over-

whelming inferiority complex, which added greatly to my difficulties." end of quote.

In his late teens the inferiority complex began to leave and he had a burning desire to study medicine. His parents being very poor in worldly goods were unable to help him. With determination he was able to borrow money from friends on a long time basis at the rate of 12% interest. Thus equipped he entered the University of Deseret now known as the University of Utah. His older brother Henry, a school teacher helped him as much as possible.

It was at the University Dr. Aird met and studied under a very great teacher Dr. John R. Parks. He contributes most of his success to Dr. Parks, who stimulated him to the extent he overcame his inferiority complex. Quote, he said, "A new world seemed to open up for me. From that time on I dearly loved Dr. Parks. My classmates and all with whom I came in contact, were more interesting and lovable. The contrast between my early life and my new life was dazzling and astounding. Dr. Parks and I became life long friends." (end of quote)

He finished his medical studies with very high grades. He was now able to start his career as a physician and surgeon.

While he was doing intern work in San Francisco he met Emily McCauslin. After a short courtship he and Emily were married June 21, 1895. To this couple were born four children, William, Florabelle, John and Robert. Both John and Robert became eminent physicians.

Shortly after their marriage they moved to Heber where Dr. Aird practiced medicine and surgery for eight years. For a number of years he was the only physician there. At that time the only hospital available to the people of Heber was situated in Provo. The only method of travel was by horse drawn vehicles. Dr. Aird found it necessary a number of times in emergency cases to operate in the home. The kitchen table was used for the operating table. With the help of only one practical nurse, and a friend he had trained to give anesthetic in emergency cases. When such operations had to be performed at

night, a neighbor would hold a kerosene lamp to give sufficient light. These operations proved very successful. A number of lives were saved which otherwise would have proved fatal had the long trip to Provo been attempted.

During Dr. Airds practice in Heber, anti-toxin was not known to be used in cases of diphtheria. An epidemic of the disease came to Heber. One family was severely stricken. Four in very serious condition. The Dr. anxious to save their lives decided to try anti-toxin. He wired to Denver, Colorado and asked for enough anti-toxin for four. When it arrived there was only enough for two. He wisely divided it among the four and all recovered. The diphtheria epidemic grew worse and the Dr. kept the wire hot to Denver and Omaha asking for the anti-toxin until the epidemic subsided. He treated ninety three cases and only lost three. He thought they received the anti-toxin too late.

A short time later he was asked by the State Medical Society to present a paper on the treatment of diphtheria with anti-toxin. It soon became general in the treatment of that dread disease. Through his devoted and sincere service, the people of Heber loved him and many remained his friends throughout his life. They continued to seek his aid and advice during his entire career in Utah. *In 1901 he moved his family to Provo.*

After eight years in Heber he had the opportunity to enter the Provo General Hospital. He was the chief ^{40 years} surgeon for many years. He helped train many nurses and with the help of two other fine doctors *Robertson & Taylor* they worked and sought to save lives. Dr. Aird worked in Provo for forty years. He performed many successful operations with a steady hand when he was well past seventy years of age.

His reputation as a physician and surgeon among his fellow workers can be found in such books as:

"The History of Utah since Statehood"

"Who's who in American Medicine".

"Who's Who Among Physicians and Surgeons"

"Who is Important in Medicine."

and other books pertaining to surgery.

Thus a young boy who was led to believe he couldn't learn became a leading surgeon in the West.

His family were well settled in California, so upon retirement he and his wife Emily decided to move to Long Beach, California. Here he lived and enjoyed being near his children until he reached the age of ninety. He died after a long and lustrous career October 15, 1953 and was laid to rest in a Long Beach cemetery.